

# Osborn Qualifies In 2 Individual Events, 2 Relays, Henke Makes Griffins History As Tigers Win Fourth Straight Boys Swim Title

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville swimmer Cohen Osborn qualified for four events, two individual and two relays, while Father McGivney Catholic's Jude Henke made history by becoming the first Griffins' swimmer to advance to the state meet as the Tigers won their fourth straight IHSA boys swimming sectional title Saturday afternoon at the Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center.

The Tigers won with 267 points, with Chatham Glenwood coming in second with 228 points Springfield High was third with 142 points, fourth place went to O'Fallon with 137 points, Springfield Sacred Heart-Griffin Catholic was fifth with 43 points, Jacksonville was sixth at 38 points, Jacksonville Routt Catholic came in seventh with 30 points and Springfield Southeast was eighth with 12 points.

The Tigers' fourth straight sectional win was indeed a great accomplishment, and head coach Christian Rhoten was very proud of his swimmers' efforts.

"I'm just really, really thrilled with how they performed today," Rhoten said. "Across the board, there were no performances that we weren't happy about."

The relay teams, long a staple of Edwardsville swimming, were a key factor in the outcome, as two of the three teams went through to state.



"Yep, we're super excited for state," Rhoten said. "Cohen Osborn was a great performer today. He's not fully rested yet, so we're going to rest him fully for the state meet and hopefully, he'll be able to go a little bit faster there."

The 200-yard medley relay team of Eddie Myers, Osborn, Owen Gruben and Evan Grinter, qualified, and Rhoten pointed out the depth of the team.

"Got two sophomores, a junior and a senior, " Rhoten said, "so really good depth on that relay. We were able to just beat out Glenwood, which we knew would be a tight race. Just a little bit off the state qualifying time, so that was a really good swim. And we also had our 200 (yard) freestyle relay, which was Eddie Myers, Austin Norcio, Evan Grinter and Cohen Osborn, and that one had a freshman, two sophomores and a senior. So our depth is really coming through for us, some guys really stepped up this year, had great years, and we're really excited to see where they go in the future."

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Alton also had great performances from their swimmers, and longtime head coach Nancy Miller was very happy with how the Redbirds did.

"Yes, my young men on my team have really performed beautifully today," Miller said. "I'm really proud of them, They stepped up when it was time to swim fast and they did."

Many of the Redbird swimmers got a shoutout from Miller for how they swam in the meet.

"Luke Norton, he dropped an entire second in his 100 (yard) butterfly," Miller said. "He's on the cusp of breaking a minute and that's a standard in swimming. that if you can break a minute in some thing for 100 yards, that's a really big deal. He'll do that very soon. Christian Kotzamanis has done a super, super job in the 50 (yard freestyle) and the 100 butterfly as well. And then, our relay swimmers, including, with the medley relay, Luke Norton and Austin Norton and Lucas Frye and Christian Kotzamanis. They placed fifth overall and did a great job. And our 200 (yard freestyle) relay just got sixth, and that was the same boys, except take off Lucas Frye and put on Aiden Kwas."

The interview with Miller took place with three events remaining, but she was very pleased with how things were going with her team.

"Yes, I'm absolutely thrilled," Miller said. "Now we do have a big event coming up in the 100 (yard) backstroke. I expect Luke Norton to really place well; he's a very good backstroker. And then our 100 (breaststroke), we have Austin Norton and Aiden Kwas and I expect them to have a very good showing."

Given all the surrounding circumstances, including the lingering COVID-19 pandemic, Miller felt that the Redbirds swam well all season and was very pleased with the body of work.

"Well, I've got to say that, given especially that we're still on the edge of COVID, you know, we're still struggling with COVID," Miller said, "I'm so pleased that the boys have risen to the occasion and that they have been a bit tenacious and have not given up. Because I think during tough times, it's easy to give up and these young men have not. And I'm very proud of that. I hope the worst of (COVID) is behind us."

For the remainder of the meet, Miller had a simple goal for her swimmers.

"Just best efforts," Miller said. "My goal in swimming is always for everyone to give their perfect effort. And that's what I tell the guys, that you can't control other things, but you can always control your attitude and you can control how you move your body."

The meet started off with the 200-yard medley relay team of Myers, Osborn, Gruben and Grinter winning the race for the Tigers with a time of 1:37.77, while Alton's team of Frye, Austin Norton, Luke Norton and Kotzamanis were fifth at 1:55.22, the Granite City team of Brady Smallie, Maddox Kennedy, Wyatt Loftus and Christopher Taylor were ninth at 2:00.35 and Highland's team of Finnegan Stever, Bryant Smith, Aiden Conrad and Camden Runge came in 10th at 2:07.53. Micheal Stooke of O'Fallon First Baptist Academy won the 200-yard freestyle with a time of 1:45.87, with Norcio coming in second at 1:50.70, Logan Oertle was sixth at 1:53.74 and Triad's Thomas Miller was seventh at 1:56.05. Maddax Thompson of Elkhart Elverado took the 200-yard individual medley at 2:00.66, with Myers fourth at 2:05.73 and the Tigers' Daniel Sanchez seventh at 2:10.02.







Willem Huggins of Carbondale won the 50-yard freestyle with a state-qualifying time of 21.62 seconds, with Henke second in a state-qualifying time of 21.66 seconds to become the first-ever Griffins' swimmer to advance to the state meet. Grinter was fourth at 22.28 seconds, Gruben was sixth at 22.76 seconds and McGivney's Ethan Henke was ninth as 23.70 seconds. In the one-meter diving event, Glenwood's Charlie Batton won with 387.75 points, while the Tigers' Hunter Schlueter was second and qualified for state with a score of 340.05 points. Edwardsville's Sam Borden was sixth with 252.40 points. Osborn then won the 100-yard butterfly with a state-qualifying time of 51.78 seconds, with Gruben third at 55.17 seconds, Luke Norton ninth at 1:00.29, Kotzamanis 10th at 1:00.90 and Runge 11th with a time of 1:04.30.



In the 100-yard freestyle, O'Fallon's Christopher Meyer won and qualified with a time of 48.09 seconds, while Jude Henke was fourth at 49.27 seconds, Grinter came in sixth at 49.76 seconds, Oertle was ninth at 51.93 seconds and Ethan Henke came in 10th with a time of 51.97 seconds. The 500-yard freestyle was won by Glenwood's Will Turk in a state-qualifying time of 4:39.79, while Norcio came in fifth at 5:10.01, Miller was sixth at 5:11.74 and Edwardsville's Danford Mason finished eighth at 5:23.91. The Tigers' team of Myers, Norcio, Grinter and Osborn took the 200-yard freestyle relay with a time of 1:29.36, with Alton's team of Kotzamanis, Luke Norton, Austin Norton and Kwas coming in sixth at 1:42.05 and Highland's team of Aiden Conrad, Stever, Smith and Runge placed eighth at 1:52.22.

Osborn was the winner in the 100-yard backstroke with a state-qualifying time of 51.09 seconds, while Huggins also qualified with a time of 52.12 seconds and Myers came in fifth at 55.50 seconds. Turk went through to state in the 100-yard breaststroke in a state-qualifying time of 57.50 seconds, while Sanchez was sixth at 1:04.79, the Tigers' Javier De La Cruz came in ninth at 1:07.22 and Kennedy came in 12th at 1:11.85. In the final event, the 400-yard freestyle relay, Glenwood's team of Mason Flatt, Andrew Senner, Lleyton Turk and Will Turk won with a time of 3:16.42, with Edwardsville's team of Luke DeConcini, Norcio, Oertle and Gruben second at 3:23.15 and Granite's team of Kennedy, Taylor, Loftus and Smallie came in sixth at 4:38.25

The state qualifiers will compete next weekend, Feb. 25-26, at FMC Natatorium in Westmont. Rhoten is optimistic about Osborn's chances in the 100-yard backstroke and also gave credit to his divers as well.

"Cohen has a shot to final in the 100 backstroke," Rhoten said. "That's really the goal with that one. I think he's got some room to move up in the 100 butterfly as well, but really, the 100 backstroke is going to be a big race. One other thing I definitely want to call out is our divers, Hunter Schlueter and Sam Borden. Both did exceptionally well this year. They're coached by Gail Lindsey, who's our assistant dive coach and they just did a great job. Really contributed well with the points to start off the meet."

Miller encouraged swimmers in the area to come out for competitive swimming, citing many of the benefits of the sport.

"Just I hope that more swimmers in the Riverbend area will come forward and do competitive swimming," Miller said. "It's such a great sport for the body, there are very little injuries in competitive swimming. It's a lifetime sport and people do it all their lives. The health benefits are just outstanding. The cardiovascular fitness, the blood pressure, everything is so good with swimming. So I hope more people come forward and do that."



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)